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IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-33 (Canceled)

34. (New) An auction method of determining a successful bidder, the auction method being executed in a server computer connected with a plurality of client computers via a network, each client computer belonging to a respective bidder, the auction method comprising the steps of:

a) transmitting, from the server computer, information on a product to be auctioned to the plurality of client computers via the network;

b) receiving, in the server computer, price information for determining a price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay for the product from each of the plurality of client computers via the network;

c) judging, in the server computer, whether a current auction price is equal to or lower than the price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay, for each bidder;

d) determining, in the server computer, a remaining bidder who sent the price information by which it is judged that the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price in step c);

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e) judging, in the server computer, that a competitive state occurs when there is more than one remaining bidder in step d);

f) if it is judged that a competitive state does not occur in step e), determining, in the server computer, the remaining bidder as a successful bidder; and

g) if it is judged that a competitive state occurs in step e), increasing the auction price by a predetermined value and repeating steps c), d), and e).

35. (New) An auction method in accordance with claim 34, wherein the price information includes a desired price with which a bidder desires to purchase the product and an acceptable price which the bidder accepts to pay in addition to the desired price.

36. (New) An auction method in accordance with claim 34, further comprising the steps of:

h) determining, in the server computer, an abandoned bidder who sent the price information by which it is judged that the current auction price is higher than the price in step c); and

i) excluding the abandoned bidder.

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37. (New) An auction device of determining a successful bidder, the auction device being connected with a plurality of client computers via a network, each client computer belonging to a respective bidder, the auction device comprising:

    a first module for transmitting information on a product to be auctioned to the plurality of client computers via the network;

    a second module for receiving price information for determining a price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay for the product from each of the plurality of client computers via the network;

    a third module for judging whether a current auction price is equal to or lower than the price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay, for each bidder;

    a fourth module for determining a remaining bidder who sent the price information by which it is judged that the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price in the third module;

    a fifth module for judging that a competitive state occurs when there is more than one remaining bidder; and

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a sixth module for, if it is judged in the fifth module that the competitive state does not occur, determining the remaining bidder as a successful bidder,

wherein, if it is judged in the fifth module that the competitive state occurs, the third, fourth, and fifth modules are repeatedly executed with the auction price increased by a predetermined value.

38. (New) An auction device in accordance with claim 36, wherein the price information includes a desired price with which a bidder desires to purchase the product and an acceptable price which the bidder accepts to pay in addition to the desired price.

39. (New) An auction device in accordance with claim 36, further comprising:

a seventh module for determining an abandoned bidder who sent the price information by which it is judged in the third module that the current auction price is higher than the price; and

an eighth module for excluding the abandoned bidder.

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40. (New) An auction method of determining a successful bidder, the auction method being executed in a server computer connected with a plurality of client computers via a network, each client computer belonging to a respective bidder, the auction method comprising the steps of:

- a) transmitting, from the server computer, information on a product to be auctioned to the plurality of client computers via the network;
- b) receiving, in the server computer, order information for the product from each of the plurality of client computers via the network;
- c) judging, in the server computer, for each bidder, whether a current auction price is equal to or lower than a price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay for the product, based on the received order information;
- d) determining, in the server computer, a remaining bidder who sent the order information based on which it is judged that the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price in step c);
- e) judging, in the server computer, that a competitive state occurs when there is more than one remaining bidder in step d);

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f) if it is judged that the competitive state does not occur in step e), determining, in the server computer, the remaining bidder as a successful bidder; and

g) if it is judged that the competitive state occurs in step e), increasing the auction price by a predetermined value and repeating steps c), d), and e).

41. (New) An auction method in accordance with claim 40, wherein the price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay is a sum total of a desired price with which the bidder desires to purchase the product and an acceptable price which the bidder accepts to pay in addition to the desired price.

42. (New) An auction method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the order information includes the desired price and the acceptable price.

43. (New) An auction method in accordance with claim 40,

wherein the order information further includes a rule defining a condition for participating in the auction, and

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wherein step c) judges whether the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay based on the rule for each bidder.

44. (New) An auction method in accordance with claim 40, further comprising the steps of:

h) determining, in the server computer, an abandoned bidder who sent the order information by which it is judged that the current auction price is higher than the price in step c); and

i) excluding the abandoned bidder.

45. (New) An auction device for determining a successful bidder, the auction device being connected with a plurality of client computers via a network, each client computer belonging to a respective bidder, the auction device comprising:

a first module for transmitting information on a product to be auctioned to the plurality of client computers via the network;

a second module for receiving order information from each of the plurality of client computers via the network;

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a third module for judging, for each bidder, whether a current auction price is equal to or lower than a price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay for the product, based on the order information;

a fourth module for determining a remaining bidder who sent the order information by which it is judged that the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price in the third module;

a fifth module for judging that a competitive state occurs when there is more than one remaining bidder, and

a sixth module for, if it is judged in the fifth module that the competitive state does not occur, determining the remaining bidder as a successful bidder,

wherein, if it is judged in the fifth module that the competitive state occurs, the third, fourth, and fifth modules are repeatedly executed with the auction price increased by a predetermined value.

46. (New) An auction device in accordance with claim 45, wherein the price that a bidder thinks acceptable to pay is a sum total of a desired price with which the bidder desires to purchase the product and an acceptable price which the bidder accepts to pay in addition to the desired price.

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47. (New) An auction device in accordance with claim 46, wherein the order information includes the desired price and the acceptable price.

48. (New) An auction device in accordance with claim 45,

wherein the order information further includes a rule defining a condition for participating in the auction, and

wherein the third module judges whether the current auction price is equal to or lower than the price that the bidder thinks acceptable to pay based on the rule for each bidder.

49. (New) An auction device in accordance with claim 45, further comprising:

a seventh module for determining an abandoned bidder who sent the order information by which it is judged in the third module that the current auction price is higher than the price; and

an eighth module for excluding the abandoned bidder.